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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography focuses on the subject of voluntary childlessness. The first section lists studies, papers, and dissertations completed after 1970 that examine individuals who have chosen to remain childless and the psychological and social implications of their decision. Another section highlights comparing childless couples to those with children, the effects of parenthood, vasectomy, income and childlessness, marital and life satisfaction, racial differences, age differences, and rural-urban variations in the decision to remain childless. Information is included for references prior to 1970 as well as a bibliography on marital satisfaction and children. Relevant books are listed by year of publication (1970-1980) and magazine articles from 1970-1980 are also cited. (NRB)

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A DECADE OF VOLUNTARY CHILDLESSNESS:

A BIBLIOGRAPHY



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THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY . . .

To the best of our knowledge, this annotated bibliography on voluntary childlessness is the most comprehensive available. Help us maintain that quality by submitting additions and suggestions for the publication's periodic update. Include your own studies, books and/or articles and those of other writers. We would be pleased to receive copies of publications and unpublished theses and dissertations. These materials and other suggested additions will be used for the bibliographic updates, our Resource Center (used by researchers and writers) and for review consideration in our national newsletter.

ANNUAL RESEARCH AWARD

For the best research paper of the year in the area of voluntary childlessness, NAOP presents an annual award, including coverage in a national press release. Deadline for submission of papers is February 1 of each year. See the enclosed "Research Award" flyer for additional information.

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NAOP serves as a clearinghouse for materials and information on voluntary childlessness. Additionally, we have resources on parenthood/childfree decision-making. Our Resource Center and staff are available to provide materials and offer assistance. Contact us by letter or phone, or schedule a visit. See enclosed flyer, "National Resource Center" for additional information.

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VOLUNTARY CHILDLESSNESS

Although a known but little studied area, voluntary childlessness came of age in the 1970's. Interest in and emphasis on when to plan for a (another) child is gradually beginning to include whether to have a child or be childfree.

Options are starting to open because:

- Researchers, media, educators and the public are becoming more aware of pronatalist pressures.
- The importance of conscious and informed decision-making regarding both parenthood and the childfree option is beginning to be recognized.
- The need to make voluntary childlessness and parenthood equally accepted and respected by families, society, institutions and government is gaining recognition.
- Many of the myths surrounding voluntary childlessness are being dispelled by scientific research.

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The National Alliance for Optional Parenthood (NAOP) is a non-profit educational membership and resource organization. NAOP is concerned with opening options: 1) by developing programs and resources to help individuals/couples make personally effective and informed decisions about parenthood/childfree options 2) by working to make the childfree decision and lifestyle socially accepted and respected.

NAOP is a non-profit, membership organization. Your contributions and dues are tax deductible.

THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY WAS DEVELOPED BY GAIL MCKIRDY AND DEBBIE NISSLEY WITH ASSISTANCE FROM DOROTHY WILSON.

STUDIES / PAPERS / DISSERTATIONS

1970 - 1980

Most annotations are modified journal, author or computer print-out abstracts.

Barnett, Larry D. and Richard H. MacDonald. "A Study of the Membership of the National Organization for Non-Parents". Social Biology. Vol. 23, Winter 1976.

A sample survey was conducted of a nationwide voluntary association whose purpose is to challenge pressures to have children and to provide support for those choosing to remain childless. The membership was predominantly under 35 years of age and married, almost entirely Caucasian, disproportionately concentrated in the higher education and income categories, and not committed to religion. Members under 35 most frequently cited the effect of children on the marital relationship as the most important reason not to have children. Pressures to have children reportedly came from the media, friends, and co-workers named as leading sources.

Beauvais, Robert. "Voluntary Childlessness and the Negotiation of Young Adulthood Development". Smith College Studies in Social Work. Vol. 46, No. 1, 1975.

The implication that childlessness reflects a developmental limitation was not supported. For most, the childless state reflected deferral or ambivalence about parenthood, suggesting the additional finding that parenthood continues to exert a powerful appeal on young people as a possible means of negotiating and mastering developmental issues. Social endorsement creates greater opportunity for persons to find an adaptive solution to the parenthood versus non-parenthood question.

Bellman, Philip. "Vasectomy and Childless Men". Unpublished paper, Reed College, 1974.

A questionnaire was sent to 71 men who had vasectomies performed at the Planned Parenthood clinic in Hollywood, CA. A 64% response demonstrated the following characteristic of the sample group: mean age of 27.8, a high education level, and basically Caucasian and never parents. Their marital status varied. The major decision these men made was to remain biologically childless. A few planned to adopt for genetic reasons and concerns about population growth. The majority had consciously decided that their own interests and activities were more important than child rearing. This choice was supported by their attitudes toward children, their general educational awareness, and often their partner's

encouragement. The respondent's short term satisfaction would seem to indicate that vasectomy had not only been functional but helpful in achieving their individual life objectives. The fact that vasectomy was safer and more effective than any other available contraceptive had also made it more attractive to these men; permanency was the only risk, and that was no risk at all when the men had so many reasons to remain childless. The author challenges medical value systems which deny men vasectomies who do not conform to the medical systems standards.

Bierkins, Peter B. "Childlessness from the Psychological Point of View". Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic. Vol. 39, No. 2, 1975.

Questionnaire responses from childless couples in the Netherlands were analyzed to determine to what extent the increasing number of childless marriages are voluntary. Findings indicated that voluntarily childless marriages are becoming more socially acceptable, but that for the most part, childlessness is still generally involuntary and associated with considerable emotional reaction. The manner in which these couples cope with their inability to have children, the extent of their often concealed grief, and the influence of the situation on the marital relationship are discussed. Both medical and social aids to the childless couple are proposed.

Blake, Judith. "Is Zero Preferred? American Attitudes Toward Childlessness in the 1970's". Journal of Marriage and the Family. May 1979.

The study showed a high level of consensus that non-parenthood is not an advantaged status and, although offspring were not regarded as economic investments, they were viewed as being socially instrumental -- they were not solely consumption goods. Less advantaged groups in the population were more likely than others to regard reproduction as a social investment, thus helping to explain the frequently-discovered inverse relationship between socio-economic status (including educational status) and either preferred or actual family size. A major finding of the work was that men were significantly more likely to regard childlessness as disadvantageous than were women.

Bram, Susan. "To Have or Have Not: A Social Psychological Study of Voluntarily Childless Couples, Parents-to-Be and Parents". Unpublished paper, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor), 1974.

A summary of a study conducted with 83 white, educated, middle-class married couples dealing with areas that differentiate childless couples, couples who are waiting, and couples with children. The study found few situational differences, but typical psychological differences highlighted by the childfree couples. The childfree couples were characterized by their views on children, on lifestyle and on marriage.

Budd, Linda G. and Richard N. Hey. "Demographic and Social Characteristics of Childfree Couples". Unpublished paper, Dept. of Family Social Studies, University of Minnesota (St. Paul), 1977.

This paper discusses the problems which have arisen in defining who are childfree couples and in obtaining a representative sample of that population. A review of the demographic and social characteristics of the samples obtained in five different studies is presented. When possible the samples of those studies are compared to the population of married couples in the United States. The authors conclude that at this point there is a need for more descriptive studies in the area of childfreeness.

Campbell, Angus. "Are Women's Lives More Frustrating and Less Rewarding Than Men's?". Presented at the Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan, November 1974.

This study reports on life satisfaction in different age and marriage brackets. The report found no significant difference in satisfaction between men and women overall, though there were differences in various categories. In comparing childfree women over 30 to their parent counterparts, little difference in satisfaction was found. Childless men present a generally positive pattern; the childless state may be more fulfilling to them than it is to women.

Das Gupta, Prithwis. "A Method of Computing Period Rates of Spinsterhood and Childlessness from Census Data Applied to the United States". Social Biology. Vol. 22, No. 2, 1975.

This is a critical presentation and interpretation of data on single women and non-parent wives. Data from the Census Bureau is broken down into a cohort and a period report of findings, and is presented as an explanation as to the increase of childlessness.

De Jong, G.F. and R.R. Sell. "Changes in Childlessness in the U.S.: A Demographic Path Analysis". Population Studies. Vol. 31, March 1977.

This is a socio-demographic study to identify factors that correlate with childlessness. The factors identified: mean age at first marriage; students' mean educational attainment; % in the labor force; central city residents; % disrupted marriages. The authors' discussion finds all these trends to be increasing, and they feel childlessness will increase as well.

Denniston, George. "The Effect of Vasectomy on Childfree Men". Presented at the International Family Planning Association Meeting, Beverly Hills, (CA). October 1976.

The author reviewed 157 vasectomies performed on childfree men. He concludes that the effectiveness and satisfaction of the men is very high as determined by the lack of complaints to the center.

The conclusion is reached that this procedure need not be withheld from young men who request it. To withhold this procedure from childfree adult males is without medical or legal justification.

DeVellis, B.M., B.S. Wallston and D. Acker. "Relationship Between Voluntary Childlessness and Motives For and Against Having Children." Presented at the 107th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, New York. November 4-8, 1979.

Sterilized non-parent women and women pregnant for the first time completed questionnaires. The respondents seldom differed in their perceptions of the costs of children but did differ on a number of scales measuring perceived benefits. The results of this study suggest that the perceived costs of children are less related to the decision to remain childless than are perceptions that having children will not bring benefits in significant areas.

Feldman, Harold and Margaret Feldman. "Effect of Parenthood at Three Points in Marriage". Psychiatric Spectator, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1977.

This is a summary of three studies on the effect of children on marriage. The first reports the lowering of satisfaction with marriage after the birth of the first child. The second reports lower satisfaction in 15 year - marriages with children compared with childfree marriages. The third summary highlights that those who never had children "substituted more adult topics of conversation for conversation about children." With this background information, the Feldmans urge greater support for parenting and also advocate continuing support for the childfree.

Feldman, Harold. "Marriage During the Post-Childrearing Period". Presented at the University of Michigan Gerontological Society's Annual Meeting, 1973.

The study focuses on two elements of the "post-childrearing years", older or younger couples, and the residual effect of children. Questioning was carried out with a large number of people in a middle to upper-middle class community. Some conclusions were as follows: marital satisfaction during the post-childrearing period was dependent on previous satisfaction; satisfaction of long-term marriages was from companionship; the residual effect of having children was to have reduced interests besides children; the happiness levels of the two groups were not dissimilar; no higher level of loneliness was found among the childfree.

Gil, Eliana. "Expectations for Parenting". Unpublished paper, San Francisco Child Abuse Council, Inc., San Francisco, CA, 1978.

This report presents several factors that have been found to correlate with child abusive potential. It next presents the results of a survey of 60 women, 30 of them currently childless. The results indicated the weight of a pronatalist society often launched women into motherhood without conscious thought, and often unaware of the responsibility parenthood demanded.

Goodbody, Sandra Toll. "Married Women, Childfree by Choice". Unpublished paper. Smith College Master's Thesis, 1975.

This study was conceived as an attempt to study the roles and norms of non-parenthood. Research focused on the views of married women who were non-parents. Of particular concern was how the role participants themselves perceived this new role. A second focus was to see how social work clinicians view the concept of non-parenthood. Findings showed that the decision to remain childless was viewed as a growth promoting and freedom giving action; control, independence, spontaneity, freedom and mobility were highly valued. Other findings; career forms a vital part of the woman's identity and provides substantial focus to her life; age is an important variable in determining the woman's personal experience as a non-parent and in effecting how this role is perceived; and, beyond certain parameters, this is a very diverse group of people. The major finding concerning the clinicians was that social workers see non-parenthood as a legitimate lifestyle option, neither better nor worse than parenthood, but simply as a different alternative.

Gustavus, Susan O. and James R. Henley, Jr. "Correlates of Voluntary Childlessness in a Select Population". Social Biology. Vol. 18, No. 3, 1971.

This paper answered questions on why people chose to remain voluntarily childless. The most common reasons were concerns for 1) population and 2) health. Other reasons mentioned were careers, age, and a dislike of child care chores or children. The sample study was 72 childless couples who applied to the Association for Voluntary Sterilization for help in obtaining sterilization. The author notes that these couples had high socio-economic status and low religion, and that there are difficulties getting representative sample populations.

Hastings, Donald W., and Gregory J. Robinson. "Incidence of Childlessness for United States Women, Cohorts Born 1891-1945". Social Biology. Vol. 21, No. 2, 1974.

The authors question conclusions of birthrate and trends towards childlessness based upon period data. They establish cohort birth rates for different time/density using national surveys. Findings include highest childlessness at ages 15-19, and lowest at 30-39, within the ever-married 14-49 year old women.

Hersch, Lee. "Self-Actualization as it Relates to the Decision to Have Children". Unpublished paper, U.S. International University, 1974.

The investigator sought information on the happiness of childless individuals. Study results found the non-parents to be in a higher income and education bracket and of high occupational status. They tended to be less religious. The two groups had no significant differences in the number of previous marriages, childhood environments, or attitudes towards why one remains childless.

Hoffman, Susan Ronnie. "A Comparison of Childfree and Child-Anticipated Couples in Relation to Marital Adjustment, Marital Type, Sex Role Identification and Generativity Concerns". Chapter 7, Child Influences on Marital and Family Interaction edited by Richard Lerner and Graham Spanier, Academic Press, 1978.

This study compared childfree couples (132) and couples anticipating children (20). Both groups were of similar educational and socio-economic backgrounds. Tested on marital adjustment and sex-role identification, the study found no significant differences between the groups.

Hotz, Joyce Novel. "An Investigation of the Nature and Defense of Voluntary Childlessness". Unpublished paper. Douglas College Thesis, May 1975.

The investigator carried out interviews with 11 childless couples, members of the National Organization for Non-Parents, and living in the New York City area. Self-descriptions by the couples found that all the wives worked, and that half their mothers had. They considered themselves largely happily married, in egalitarian marriages, and non-religious. They did not explicitly bring up their childfree decision with their parents, though when it became known to relatives and acquaintances they always explained their decision. Two factors described as reasons for the decision to be childfree were financial and personal freedoms. The typical path described for decision-making was: 1) postponement for a definite period of time; 2) postponement for an indefinite period of time; 3) qualitative change of thought; 4) definite conclusion to remain childless; 5) implicit decision to remain childless.

Houseknecht, Sharon K. "Childlessness and Marital Adjustment". Presented at the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, CA, 1978.

The purpose of this study was 1) to examine the relationship between voluntary childlessness (not involuntary childlessness or postponement of childbearing labeled as childlessness) and marital adjustment and 2) to eliminate the possibility of certain alternative explanations that could account for any difference that might be observed. Childless wives were precision-matched with mothers on three variables -- education, religion, and participation in the labor force. Consensus, cohesion, satisfaction, and affection expression were four components of marital adjustment that served as a basis for comparing these women. The findings reveal that the women who were childless by choice scored higher in overall marital adjustment that served as a basis for comparing these women. The findings reveal that the women who were childless by choice scored higher in overall marital adjustment but that this difference was not uniform across all areas of adjustment. The component that possessed the greatest discriminating power was "cohesion."

Houseknecht, Sharon K. "Female Employment and Reduced Family Size: Some Additional Insight on the Direction of the Relationship". Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Boston, MA, August 1979.

Do plans for participation in the labor force create a preference for smaller family size or do initial family size intentions dictate the degree of commitment to employment activities outside the home? The data in this study confirm that the lifestyle of voluntarily childless "postponers" (those who intended to have children but changed their minds) entailed a very high commitment to outside-the-home employment activities. Since the mean age at marriage for those working women (now 25-40) was 21.9, it is apparent that much of their career development, including very high levels of education, had occurred after they were married. Therefore, at least one motivating force that influenced them to change their minds about having children was employment. If women do find alternative sources of satisfaction outside the home, such as employment, it is inevitable that they will compete with motherhood because every person has only a limited supply of time and energy.

Houseknecht, Sharon K. "Reference Group Support for Voluntary Childlessness: Evidence for Conformity". Journal of Marriage and the Family. May 1977.

The purpose of this study was to test four hypotheses in an attempt to demonstrate that reference group support is an influential factor in deciding not to have children. The results show that the majority of women who wished to remain childless had reference group support for their decision, although they characteristically had fewer reference groups than those females who looked forward to having children. The data further demonstrates that even though the "desire no children" women, like the "desire children" women, were aware of the negative pressures and sanctions that accompany noncompliance to the dominant social norm prescribing children, the childfree exhibited significantly less overall concern.

Houseknecht, Sharon K. "A Social Psychological Model of Voluntary Childlessness". Alternative Lifestyles. Vol. 1, No. 2, August 1978.

The purpose was to test eight hypotheses in an effort to explain the desire for a childless lifestyle at a relatively early age. 1) Family Background Factors; 2) Self-Other Attitudes; 3) Reference Groups play a central role in the decision to remain voluntarily childless. The family background factors are seen as instigative in the development of autonomy and achievement orientation. These two factors, accompanied by a belief that the advantages associated with childlessness outweigh the advantages associated with childbearing, predispose an individual to desire a childless lifestyle particularly when these various attitudes are sustained through reference group support.

Houseknecht, Sharon K. "Timing of the Decision to Remain Voluntarily Childless: Evidence for Continuous Socialization". Psychology of Women Quarterly. Vol. 4, No. 1, Fall 1979.

This study contrasts different types of voluntary childlessness. Women who decided to remain childless relatively early in life, before marriage (early articulators) were compared with women who did not decide until after they had married and developed a preferred lifestyle that did not include children (postponers). The comparison centered on a previously formulated model that explained the decision to remain childless in terms of family background factors, autonomy and achievement orientation in adulthood, and reference group support. The major difference disclosed by this research focused on family background factors. In addition to the early versus late decision to remain childless, socialization patterns in the family of orientation differentiate the two types of voluntarily childless women.

Jamrozy, Linda Hirsch. "Attitudes Towards Voluntary Childlessness". California State College Master's Thesis, March 1972.

The study was designed to measure the attitudes of 392 college students and adult education students towards voluntary childlessness. The respondents were grouped by sex, marital status, and presence of children. The results of the analyses indicated that there was a significant difference between men and women in their attitudes toward voluntary childlessness. This difference in attitude can be attributed to many factors. The discussion was restricted to two main factors, the change in women's roles in our society and women's liberation.

Kaltreider, Nancy B. and Alan G. Margolis. "Childless by Choice: A Clinical Study". American Journal of Psychiatry. Vol. 134, No. 2. February 1977.

The authors report on a longitudinal study that involved the interviewing and testing of 33 young women volunteers who chose either contraception or tubal ligation to achieve infertility. They found that for those women the choice to be childless was multidetermined, persistent over time, and ego-syntonic. Comparison with other samples of women indicate that this is a distinct and non-traditional population.

Kunz, Phillip, Merlin B. Brinkerhoff and Vickie Hurdley. "Relationship of Income and Childlessness". Social Biology. Vol. 20, No. 2, 1973.

This study was designed as a refinement of a study on black/white childlessness. It reported an inverse relationship of percentage childless and income. The researcher conjectures this may be due to lack of money for medical treatment, or to rear the child. It points out the possibility that studies of childless couples may not be investigating the real concentration of childlessness.

Lichtman, Carl Herbert. "Voluntary Childlessness: A Thematic Analysis of the Person and the Process". (Ed.D. dissertation). Dissertation Abstracts International. No. 76-21028, 1976.

Common themes were found in the voluntarily childless person's perception of both childhood and the effects of childrearing on his/her parents' lives. This suggested that the decision to parent/not to parent is related to early socialization experiences. Children were seen as disadvantageous to personal growth and self-fulfillment, and parenthood was perceived as restraining one's independence or potentially harming the marital relationship. Themes of freedom, spontaneity, and lack of limitation on personal choice were being carried out in the childless lifestyle. It is concluded that the decision to remain childless is a totality and a process which negates selection of any one salient factor.

Lieberman, Richard G. et. al. "Vasectomy for the Single, Childless Man". Family Practice Grand Rounds. The Journal of Family Practice. Vol. 8, No. 1, 1979.

Discussions took place between seven clinicians regarding the decisions involved in providing a vasectomy for a childless man. Many issues were covered, including patients' rights, doctors' authority and the personal feelings of various physicians.

Magarick, Ronald H. and Robert A. Brown. "Social and Emotional Aspects of Voluntary Childlessness in Vasectomized Childless Men". Presented at the 104th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, Miami Beach, FL, 1976.

In response to the need to clarify and correct stereotypes of the childless, this study was undertaken to investigate: the relationship of voluntary childlessness and social and emotional adjustment and marital satisfaction, identification of socialization factors, and feelings of stereotyping. Four surveys were conducted. Findings were as follows: 1) no overall adjustment differences between the groups; 2) modes of adjustment differ somewhat; non-parents are less traditional and parents more people oriented; 3) marital satisfaction levels similar; 4) no evidence to support the idea that birth order is significantly different; 5) non-parents have fewer religious affiliations; 6) childless men feel negatively stereotyped.

Marcks, Beatrice Raynor. "Voluntarily Childless Couples: An Exploratory Study". Unpublished paper. Syracuse University Master's Thesis. August 1976.

The author chose to research childless couples because she felt it was an inadequately understood and unaccepted area. She gathered data from 21 voluntarily childless couples who were members of the National Organization for Non-Parents,

an upper-middle class, white, highly-educated sample. The report indicates that these people chose childlessness because of positive feelings about the state of their lives, rather than negative feelings about parenting. It was also found that the decision was usually reached from 1-6 years after marriage. The women reported more community pressure, and also support for the decision from the maternal family.

Meda, Rebecca. "Stability and Change in the Lives of Voluntarily Childless Couples". Dissertation Abstracts International. No. 77-26344, 1977

Stability and change in the lives of voluntarily childless couples were studied, and a model of sex-role development suggesting a postconventional sex-role orientation as a nondeviant developmental alternative was proposed. Data on attitudes toward children (values, costs, effect of parenthood) showed change predominating over stability. Analysis of lifestyle variables indicated that ego support decreased in time as a satisfaction in marriage; cohesiveness decreased as a dissatisfaction. Marriage and achievement were the most satisfying things in life; situational constraints the most dissatisfying. In general, couples were transitional, exhibiting both stereotypic and innovative patterns; attitudes about work were clearly innovative. It is pointed out that voluntarily childless couples do not have common attitudes that are stable over time; rather, events occurring to individuals and couples influence attitudes and attitude change as well as behavior. It is suggested that sex-role development continues in adulthood and is determined not only by intrapsychic or perceptual changes but also by changes in other people, in the life situation of the person (and couple), and by the historical/cultural milieu.

Movius, Margaret. "Voluntary Childlessness -- the Ultimate Liberation". The Family Coordinator. Vol. 25, January 1976.

Working mothers experience tremendous demands on their time and energy as a result of the combined responsibilities of a job, a family, and a home. Career-oriented wives may increasingly consider the childfree state as a liberating alternative. Freed from child care responsibilities, a woman who is committed to a career may benefit from greater mobility, fewer family commitments, and more time for professional development. Career women may find the flexibility and freedom afforded them by the childfree alternative are necessary for competing in today's world.

Newport, John. "Parenthood is Optional -- Or Is It?" Presented at the 104th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, Miami Beach, FL, Oct. 20, 1976.

The report was presented as a way of introducing responsible decision-making and the non-parent option as a way of preventing unhappy parents and child abuse.

Ory, Marcia. "The Decision to Parent or Not: Normative and Structural Components". Journal of Marriage and the Family. August 1978.

The study addresses antecedent factors associated with the decision to parent or not to parent. Three interrelated aspects of fertility were investigated: 1) the existence of childbearing norms; 2, the strength of reinforcing social sanctions; and 3) the influence of social structural factors on the incorporation of such norms. The overall conclusion of this study indicated fertility outcomes. However, these influences were different for each subgroup. Non-parents' defiance of dominant childbearing norms might imply a strict decision-making model. Non-parents' isolation from parents and close association with other non-parents, as well as their redefinition of the social meanings of parenthood suggest that non-parents' attitudes and behavior are not a normative but rather motivated by adherence to deviant subcultural norms.

Peterson, Rolf A. "Change in College Students' Attitudes Toward Child-Bearing from 1971 to 1973". Journal of Personality Assessment. Vol. 39, No. 3, 1975.

Two samples of college students, one obtained in 1971 and one in 1973, were asked to draw a picture of a happily married couple. Some subjects were asked to draw the couple after two years of marriage and some after five years of marriage. The pictures were scored for the presence or absence of children as an estimate of the attitude that children are necessary for a happy marriage. A large decrease in the "presence of children" from the 1971 to 1973 sample was interpreted as indicating that fewer college students now accept the notion that children are necessary for marital happiness.

Polit, Denise F. "Stereotypes Relating to Childlessness and Differential Family Size". (Ph.D. dissertation). Dissertation Abstracts International. 77-17602, 1977.

Socially standardized perceptions of childlessness and differential family size were examined, and stereotyped perceptions were analyzed in terms of the respondent personality characteristics. Findings: Voluntarily childless men and women and parents of only one child were rated more socially undesirable, less well adjusted, less nurturant, more autonomous, more succorant, and more socially distant than other family size groups (two, four, or eight children). Parents of eight children received the most positive ratings, and the involuntarily childless were rated most socially desirable. Positive ratings of voluntary childlessness were associated with higher educational levels, non-Catholicism, younger age, and smaller family.

Poston, Dudley L. "Characteristics of Voluntarily and Involuntarily Childless Wives". Social Biology. Vol. 23, No. 3, 1976.

Drawing upon data from the 1965 National Fertility Study, this paper attempted to categorize white wives by their form of childlessness. Three categories of childlessness emerged: voluntary, involuntary, and temporary. The three types of childless wives were compared across a number of demographic, socio-economic, marital, and religious characteristics. The voluntarily and involuntarily childless wives were remarkably similar on most characteristics, and differed significantly from the temporarily childless.

Poston, Dudley L. "Income and Childlessness in the United States: Is the Relationship Always Inverse?" Social Biology. Vol. 21, No. 3, 1974.

In response to studies which find childlessness inversely related to income, due to money available for raising children and fixing fecundity problems, the researcher found a direct relationship. The difference came from separating voluntarily from involuntarily childless couples.

Poston, Dudley L. Jr. and Gotard, Erin. "Trends in Childlessness in the United States, 1910 - 1975." Social Biology. Vol. 24, No. 3, 1977.

Data assembled from assorted census materials permit cohort and period investigations for a number of time periods, from 1910 to 1975, for various racial and ethnic groups. Whether examined at the period or cohort level, the incidences in percentage rates of childlessness have varied irregularly over time. Younger cohorts of white women (those beginning fecundity after 1965) were focused on, with this group showing higher rates of childlessness at each age than any of the older cohorts at similar ages in the reproductive cycle. It was suggested that a major portion of the increasing rates of these younger cohorts may be attributed to increases in voluntary childlessness, which in turn may be linked to broader changes in the social fabric regarding fertility control, contraceptive technology, female work preferences and patterns, and changing sexual and family norms.

Prochaska, Janice and Janice Coyle. "Choosing Parenthood: A Needed Family Life Education Group". Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work. 1979.

Changes in attitude and a greater social acceptance of alternative lifestyles provide couples with the option of deciding not to have children. However, little help has been available for couples struggling with the decision of whether or not to have children.

A couples' group was developed to provide an opportunity to discuss ambivalence, fears, and expectations about having children. The results indicated that the group members responded best to topics dealing with feelings and personal experiences rather than facts. In addition, they felt less hostile toward those people who felt differently than they, and less defensive about their decisions. The participants valued sharing their concerns with others facing the same decision.

Raphael, Deborah Anne. "The Childfree Marriage: Its Social and Psychological Implications". Smith College Studies in Social Work. Vol. 46, No. 1, 1975.

Data analysis revealed that the sample was similar to previously described voluntarily childless couples. Many of the individuals were highly committed to their beliefs and had been sterilized. Geographic mobility, high educational attainment and individuality were factors correlating with a decision to remain childfree. The two most prevalent reasons for this decision were a need for independence and autonomy and a wish for change, excitement and freedom from the daily responsibilities of childrearing. The institution of monogamous marriage, while changing to include more egalitarian relationships and less binding commitments, survived in these couples' relationships.

Renne, Karen S. "Childlessness, Health, and Marital Satisfaction". Social Biology. Vol. 23, No. 3, 1976.

Data on the health and well-being of 2,480 married couples in an urban area probability sample suggest that parenthood detracts from the physical and psychological health of husbands and wives, particularly among younger couples. Rates of joint marital satisfaction also were lower for active parents than for former parents and childless couples, regardless of the duration of the marriage, and the wife's age and employment status. That parenthood may be detrimental to both health and marital satisfaction is suggested by the finding that former parents were better off than active parents on both indices, though not as well off as childless spouses.

Ritchey, Neal P. and Shannon C. Stokes. "Correlates to Childlessness and Expectations to Remain Childless: U.S. 1967". Social Forces. Vol. 52, March 1974.

Childlessness varies regularly by a number of sociodemographic factors. Given the virtually universal acceptance of the norm concerning the desirability of children, why does childlessness vary so widely among social aggregates? First, it may simply be the case that this norm is not as universal as previously thought. Alternatively, if the norm is as widespread as represented, various social structural influences may operate to counter, selectively, the prevailing norms and produce

deviance. Data from the 1967 Survey of Economic Opportunity for wives still in the childbearing years were used to explore these alternatives. Expectation data, interpreted as indicating the normative position of couples on remaining childless, are contrasted with current rates of childlessness for a number of factors. Comparisons suggest the second alternative and direct future research to include structural considerations.

Russell, Martha Garrett, Richard N. Hey, Gail A. Thoen, and Tom Walz. "The Choice of Childlessness: A Workshop Model". The Family Coordinator. April 1978.

This paper presents a three-session workshop model designed to integrate exploratory research and service to childfree couples and describes the pilot workshop and research from which it was derived. Focusing on each couple's decision-making commitment, and mutual support regarding the decision to remain childfree, this workshop design maximizes the utilization of participants' insights so as to illuminate conceptual and practical issues associated with voluntary childlessness on both personal and collective levels. The compatibility of research and service is presented as applicable to other family life issues.

Ryder, Robert G. "Longitudinal Data Relating Marriage Satisfaction and Having a Child". Journal of Marriage and the Family. November, 1973.

Longitudinal data, comparing couples who had a child with those who did not, showed related changes in questionnaire measures of "marriage satisfactions." The clearest finding was that women who have a child become more likely to report that their husbands are not paying enough attention to them.

Silka, Linda and Sara Kiesler. "Couples Who Choose to Remain Childless". Family Planning Perspectives. Vol. 9, No. 1, Jan./Feb. 1977.

Noting the decreased fertility in the U.S. since 1961, and the increasing trend towards childlessness, the report attempts to identify some features of the childless couple. The study suggests "that couples who intend never to have children plan their families and make decisions about childbearing more carefully and deliberately than do other couples." In carrying out their decision to have no children, these couples had used and planned to continue using the most effective birth control techniques (particularly the pill and sterilization) and had rejected the less effective techniques. They had spoken with others about their plans, even though they were apparently subjected to social pressure against childlessness. These findings cannot be attributed to differences among couples in such background factors as age, education or social class, nor to variations among groups in the relative impact of the male-female differences. Nor, apparently to different attitudes regarding women's liberation.

Sussman, Marvin B. "Final Report of the 1978 Groves Conference on Marriage and the Family". Washington, D.C., 1978.

This is a report of topics that are important to consider in regard to families since there are so many varieties of "families" in the United States. It was found that having childlessness as an option may make parenthood and family life more meaningful. Topic suggestions for report presentations to the 1981 White House Conference on Families are given.

Teicholz, Judith Guss. "Psychological Correlates of Voluntary Childlessness in Married Women". Presented at the Eastern Psychological Association Meeting, Washington, D.C., March 1978.

Using nationally established tests the investigator studied whether popular prejudice against childlessness had any factual basis. Two comparable groups were used as test samples: voluntarily childless women and women expecting to become pregnant within two years. There were no significant differences on socialization or adjustment scales. The women intending to remain childless did, however, score more androgynously on the Bem sex-role test.

Thoen, Gail Ann. "Commitment Among Voluntary Childfree Couples to a Variant Lifestyle". University of Minnesota Doctoral Thesis, June 1977.

This was a study of the correlates to commitment to a childfree lifestyle. The survey was designed to test the antecedents rationale, pressure, values, and agreement with degree of the scores on the antecedent scales and commitment levels. It did not show a correlation between antecedent factors. In responding to earlier literature on the subject, the investigator found a significant relationship of ordinal position and religious attitude to the commitment, but no socio-economic relationship. There was found to be a correlation between husband/wife scores on commitment, but not on antecedent factors. The researcher sees possible future use of the findings in two areas: 1) commitment motivations; 2) commitment to childlessness and mate selection.

Thornton, Arland. "Children and Marital Stability". Journal of Marriage and the Family. August 1977.

This research investigated the relationship between early childbearing and marital instability. A moderate U-shaped relationship between the number of children a woman had at the beginning of an interval and the likelihood that she would experience dissolution during the interval was found. Women with large families and those with no children were the most likely to experience disruption. The lowest dissolution rates were found for those with moderate numbers of children.

Townes, Brenda D., Lee Roy Beach, Frederick L. Campbell and Donald C. Martin. "Birth Planning Values and Decisions: The Prediction of Fertility". Journal of Applied Social Psychology. Vol. 7, No. 1, 1977.

This investigation was a prospective study based upon subjective expected utility theory, of the processes and determinants of birth planning decisions. The hypothesis tested was: Where maximum expected benefit will derive from having a (another) child, a pregnancy will occur and maximum expected benefit will derive from not having a (another) child a pregnancy will not occur. Values associated with birth planning decisions for 74 married couples were found to be good predictors, one year later, of pregnancy status. The implications of these results were discussed as they related to birth planning counseling and to population policy.

Veenhoven, Ruut. "Is There an Innate Need for Children?". Maternal Instinct. 1974.

The author feels that much of the anxiety about government fertility control measures stems from the belief that children are innately desired by all people. He presents seven assumptions that are made that lead from the point that all animals desire offspring to the conclusion that adults who don't want children are lacking something. He then disproves the assumptions, using data from a Netherlands study.

Veenhoven, Ruut. "Voluntary Childlessness Marriage and Singleness". Presented at the International Women's Year tribunal session on the family. 1975.

Veenhoven believes that marriage and motherhood are restrictive roles. Women enter these roles because of societal pressures, and personal expectations of loneliness without a husband or children. Veenhoven reports, however, that studies from the Netherlands and the U.S. indicate: single life is indeed less satisfying, but mainly for men; the childless life is relatively more satisfying.

Veevers, J.E. "Childlessness and Age at First Marriage". Social Biology. Vol. 18, No. 3, 1971.

Most studies that have reported the lower fertility rates of women who marry when they are older, indicate it is due to sub-fecundity. Veevers compared a Catholic, rural group of women who married when they were older with an urban, non-Catholic group. Her findings indicate that the lower fertility of older women may be due solely to psychological disinclination towards childbearing.

Veevers, J.E. "Differential Childlessness by Color: A Further Examination". Social Biology. Vol. 18, No. 3, 1971.

In the early part of this century most childlessness was non-voluntary. Studies prior to 1940 found many non-white couples unable to have children for health reasons. This cause of infertility for non-white has been dropping, and it seems that the rate of childlessness is reaching a uniform low rate.

Veevers, J.E. "Factors in the Incidence of Childlessness in Canada: An Analysis of Census Data". Social Biology. Vol. 19, No. 3, 1972.

Examining the claims that voluntary childlessness has disappeared, Veevers investigated the relative commonness of psychological or physiological reasons for childlessness. The results found that there are fewer women in young, married cohorts who are childless than among older cohorts, but that voluntary childlessness did still seem to have a role.

Veevers, J.E. "The Moral Careers of Voluntarily Childless Wives: Notes on the Defense of a Variant World View". Family Coordinator. Vol. 24, No. 4, 1975.

Although voluntarily childless couples perceive that their anti-natalist sentiments result in a variety of negative sanctions, they remain relatively unperturbed by social pressure. This paradoxical situation is achieved and maintained through adherence to a variant world view which is essentially the opposite of the motherhood mystique. Four related defense mechanisms are involved: 1) selective perception of the consequences of parenthood; 2) differential association resulting in physical and psychological isolation from conflicting world views; 3) structuring of parenthood so as to reaffirm existing biases; and 4) capitalizing upon social ambivalence towards parenthood, enabling the childless to assail the motivations of their detractors by reinterpreting disapproval as envy. Several conditions are outlined which may maximize the viability of voluntary childlessness as an alternative to traditional family forms.

Veevers, J.E. "The Parenthood Prescription". Alternatives: Perspectives on Society and Environment. Vol. 3, No. 3, Spring 1974.

Veevers reacts to a pronatalist Canadian society, pointing out that pronatalism is prevalent in government policies and family planning. Investigation of trends in childlessness, childlessness and population policy, and childlessness and personal adjustment are discussed. Five policy suggestions to counter pronatalism are outlined: questioning the inevitability of parenthood, postponement of child-bearing, fertility control, counselling prospective parents, and the non-baby bonus.

Veevers, J.E. "Parenthood and Suicide: An Examination of a Neglected Variable". Social Science Medicine. Vol. 7, 1973.

Almost all examinations of suicide have neglected the basic dimension of having or not having children. Data on the relationship on childlessness and suicide were presented. It was suggested that the large part of variation in suicide rates which had been attributed to different marital statuses might more accurately be attributed to different parental statuses. If comparisons were drawn between persons who are parents and persons who do not have children, a different picture might emerge.

Veevers, J.E. "Rural-Urban Variation in the Incidence of Childlessness". Rural Sociology. Vol. 36, No. 4, December 1971.

Sociologists have been extensively concerned with measuring and explaining differential fertility, including discrepancies between rural and urban areas. However, by considering fertility only in terms of conglomerative indices, they have overlooked the important distinction between some children and no children. Data from the 1961 Canadian census are examined in terms of rural-urban differentials in fertility as reflected in a new indicator, the rate of childlessness. The probability that a married woman will become a mother is found to be consistently lower in urban areas than in rural nonfarm areas and lower there than in rural farm areas.

Veevers, J.E. "The Social Meanings of Parenthood". Psychiatry. Vol. 36, August, 1973.

Many of the assumed benefits of parenthood, and the correlating problems of non-parents are discussed. The areas where parenthood is perceived as having social meaning are: responsibility, maturity, naturalness, sexual identity and competence, marriage and normality. The general acceptance of societal stereotypes may lead to pronatalism and pressure on non-parents to conform.

Veevers, J.E. "Voluntary Childlessness: A Neglected Area of Family Study". The Family Coordinator. April, 1973.

Studies of the family have tended to focus on some aspects of the institution to the exclusion of other pertinent topics. One area subject to such "selective inattention" is the phenomenon of childlessness, especially voluntary childlessness. Empirical research on childlessness would provide a necessary control group for analyses of motivations for parenthood, and of the effects of children on personal and marital adjustment. In addition, knowledge of the conditions under which voluntary childlessness constitutes a viable and satisfactory alternate lifestyle would have wide reaching implications for more rational advice giving in marital counseling and for new alternatives for population control programs.

Veevers, J.E. "Voluntary Childlessness: A Review of Issues and Evidence". Marriage and Family Review, 1979.

Permanent voluntary childlessness is estimated to be characteristic of about 5% of married couples and, although the incidence is increasing, such couples are expected to remain a small minority. Causes and consequences of childlessness are reviewed in terms of three hypotheses: diagnostic, labelling, and deprivation. Discussions of the major demographic correlates of childlessness include: black-white differences, rural-urban differences, age at first marriage, marital stability, education, religion, employment, and income. Consequences of childlessness are discussed in terms of seven indicators of life adjustment: mortality, morbidity, mental health, occupational achievement, divorce, marital morale, and marital interaction.

Veevers, J.E. "Voluntary Childlessness and Social Policy: An Alternative View". The Family Coordinator. October 1974.

Research on voluntary childlessness has implications for at least three kinds of situations wherein social policies are formulated and enacted: first, the relationship between citizens and politicians in which pronatalist policies are expounded; second, the relationship between clients and professional counselors in which parenthood is advocated; and third, the relationship between patients and physicians in which access to fertility control is restricted. Involuntary parenthood contributes to population problems and may have deleterious consequences for the mental health of both parent and child. Some suggestions are outlined for counteracting pronatalist policies with alternative strategies for manipulating fertility decision-making.

Veevers, J.E. "Voluntarily Childless Wives: An Exploratory Study". Sociology and Social Research. April 1973.

In-depth unstructured interviews with voluntarily childless wives suggested that most of the women remain childless through a series of postponements of child-bearing, involving at least four separate stages. Informal sanctioning of childless couples is most intense during the fourth and fifth years of marriage. Factors relating to satisfaction with childlessness are discussed in terms of symbolic importance, of adoption and of supportive ideologies.

Waller, Jerome, Raja B. Rao, and C.C. Li. "Heterogeneity of Childless Families". Social Biology. Vol. 20, No. 2, 1973.

In designing a negative binomial distribution scale to explain completed family size, it was found that the childless family did not fit. There were excess numbers of the childless, which lead the researcher to conclude there are two populations comprising the childless: the subsecund and the voluntarily childless.

Weiss, Eugene. "Male Youths' Attitudes Toward Population Control, Family Planning and Desired Family Size". Presented at the 80th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1972.

A study of young men was carried out to allow predictions about future fertility activity of this generation. It was found that they were heavily prejudiced against 0-or 1-child families, and against families larger than four. The ideal family size seemed to be determined by how much credence they gave to: the economic cost of having a child and fear of overpopulation versus the increased happiness of a child in a big family, and the need for particular gender children.

THE FOLLOWING ANNOTATIONS LACK PERTINENT BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

Bram, Susan. "Voluntary Childlessness in the Early 1970's",

This paper is a summary of an earlier paper, and a survey of childless, delayed, and parent couples in the early 70's. The author hoped that by examining this study one might be able to learn about childless patterns in order to predict trends. Comparisons of the three samples found no significant family background differences. Significant differences did, however, appear in the evaluation of problems associated with children, and in peer group make-up. Childless marriages appeared to be more compassionate and lifestyles more egalitarian. Also, the childless were aware of social pressures toward parenthood.

Burnside, Beverly Marguerite. "Gender Roles and Lifestyle: A Sociocultural Study of Voluntary Childlessness". Unpublished paper.

Numerous testing measures were carried out with 2 couples, parents and non-parents. The purpose of the study was to distinguish the couples, and to see what social policies would bring about more childfree couples. The results showed no significant difference in the couples' demographics or social patterns, except non-parents had more non-parent friends. Non-parents were also more likely to have "less 'stable' natal homes". The main difference was a much less restricted set

of gender roles. The reasons given for this are similar to their reasons for not having children: they do not want to "impinge on personal freedom". The couples did not feel they were "social deviants". The study concludes that society is moving in ways that encourage childlessness.

Jamison, Pollyann H. "Students' Perceptions of a Married, Sterilized Woman as a Function of Motherhood Versus Child-free Status". Unpublished paper, San Diego State University (CA).

This study was carried out to test the prevalence of non-parent stereotyping. The test subjects were students, who were asked to complete a questionnaire about "Kathy" after reading a description of her. Half the subjects read that she was childfree, half read that she had two children. The childfree "Kathy" was seen as less happy, sensitive, loving, typical, and less able to get along with her parents. She was depicted as more likely to be an active feminist. Those assumptions are not borne out by research with the exception that child-free women are less typical.

Leibo, Steven A. and Jennifer L. Santee. "Sterilization for the Non-Parent: Preliminary Findings From a Study of the Psychological Aspects of Fertility Termination". Unpublished paper, Laboratory of Behavior and Population (San Francisco, CA).

This study summarizes the findings from interviews with 30 couples who had decided 1) to be non-parents and 2) on surgical termination. These were treated as separate decisions. The researchers report that the women had much stronger verbalized reasons for electing to be non-parents. The women most often mentioned dissatisfaction with their own childhood, the demands of children, and a growing pride in their work accomplishments. The men did not seem to feel children were a direct threat to their careers, but they worried about the way children would strain their enjoyment of the good lives they had. The impetus to elect sterilization was often due to difficulty with contraception, or a forced pregnancy. Follow-up a year later found more regrets among those who were separated or divorced, and confirmation of the notion that the decision must be decided on an individual basis. The researchers challenged society's pressure on individuals to have children, which forces people to justify the decision by negative aspects of their past rather than positive views of a childfree future.

Monahan, Thomas P. "Is Childlessness Related to Family Stability?"
American Sociological Review.

The author reviewed literature and studies that have been conducted correlating divorce and childlessness. He found that the studies used incomplete definitions or correlations, and that there was no significant correlation between children and marital stability. He suggested it may be more likely that there is a correlation of children and desertion.

Oakley, Deborah and Barbara Schechtman. "Childlessness in the United States". Unpublished paper. School of Public Health, The University of Michigan (Ann Arbor).

Trends in childlessness in the U.S. show that among ever-married women born two decades before and after the year 1900 had high rates of childlessness, while women born in the 1930's had extremely low rates of childlessness. Contemporary social and demographic trends suggest return to the earlier trends among cohorts of women now in their 20's. A major factor among women who delay childbearing until their mid-20's, is ambivalence about the value of motherhood for them. Decisions about whether to have children at all are part of a dynamic life-building process that includes influences from the social, economic, and familial environment as well as personal preferences and attitudes toward children.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"HOW CHILDREN AFFECT MARITAL SATISFACTION: A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY" IS A BROAD SAMPLING OF THE RESEARCH DEALING WITH VARIOUS GOALS AND VALUES IN MARRIAGE AND HOW CHILDREN AFFECT THE ATTAINMENT OF THESE GOALS. MATERIAL RANGES FROM THE 1950's THROUGH THE 1970's. ANNOTATIONS ARE PRESENTED. 1979. \$1.50 PLUS 20¢ POSTAGE. ORDER FROM NAOP. PUB. F-7.

A LISTING (WITHOUT ANNOTATIONS) OF 33 STUDIES, PAPERS, BOOKS AND MEDIA ARTICLES ON VOLUNTARY CHILDLESSNESS, PUBLISHED PRIOR TO 1970, IS AVAILABLE FROM NAOP. SEND 50¢ AND A STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE, REQUESTING "BIBLIOGRAPHY - 1978."

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